

# Relationship Conflict Management Patterns Among Sex Dysfunction, Sex Offender, and Satisfied Couples

MICHAEL E. METZ and S. MARGRETTA DWYER

*A substantial amount of research has distinguished specific behaviors of distressed from nondistressed couples. Among this evidence are differences in relationship conflict management styles. This investigation examined differences in relationship satisfaction and conflict management styles among 30 sex dysfunction, 25 sex offender, and 26 satisfied couples assessed by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Styles of Conflict Inventory (SCI). Results indicate significantly different levels of marital adjustment and distinctive conflict management patterns among the three couples groups. The two sex problem groups were significantly more distressed than the satisfied couples, and sex offender couples appeared more conflicted than sex dysfunction couples. Compared to satisfied couples, sex dysfunction couples address relationship conflict with somewhat polarized roles with an "avoid vs. engage" pattern, while sex offender couples employ a more chaotic "engage-avoid vs. engage-avoid" style. These different patterns of reactivity to conflict suggest that individualized treatment approaches to this dimension of the clinical picture is warranted.*

General psychological theories of marital, sexual, and family distress have emphasized the role of conflict in the etiology, maintenance, and therapeutic outcome of dysfunctional relationships.<sup>1-6</sup> A substantial amount of research has distinguished specific behaviors of distressed from nondistressed couples.<sup>7-9</sup> For example, studies have found differences in

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Michael E. Metz, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Marital & Sex Therapy Program, the Program in Human Sexuality, Department of Family Practice & Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School, Suite 180, 1300 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55454; and Adjunct Assistant Professor, Marriage & Family Therapy Program, Family Social Sciences, University of Minnesota, St. Paul. S. Margretta Dwyer, M.A., L.P., is Instructor and Coordinator of the Sex Offender Program, Program in Human Sexuality, Department of Family Practice & Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School, Minneapolis.